

## An analytical study of the Sama'ani Sources in *Rawh el-Arwah fi sharh Asmaa- al -Malek al-Fattah*

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### Introduction

*Rawh al-Arwah fi sharh asmaa al-malik al-fattah* is the earliest Persian book on the Divine Names, composed in a poetic prose and rich in delicate mystical insights. The author of *Rawh al-Arwah* was a man knowledgeable in the sciences of his time, an eloquent speaker with refined imagination, who wrote under the pen name **Rahi**; accordingly, his prose also reflects a distinctly poetic character (Sama'ani, 1391: 29). All the sayings and statements of the Khurasanian elders and the shaykhs of Baghdad cited in the book belong to those Sufis and mystics who passed away prior to 500–530 AH, and the historical accounts presented in the work do not extend beyond the fifth century AH (Sama'ani, 1391: 22). Seven manuscripts of the book are preserved in various libraries around the world (Sama'ani, 1391: 17). and several scholars, including Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar, Mohammad-Taqi Daneshpazhuh, and Mohammad-Reza Shafi'i Kadkani, have examined the extant copies and emphasized its significance. Sama'ani expounds 101 Divine Names under 74 headings, grouping certain names with dual forms or semantic opposition and affinity under a single heading. In addition to the ninety-nine Names unanimously accepted by commentators, he includes three additional designations—*Hu*, *Allah*, and *al-ladhi la ilaha illa Hu*.

After introducing each Name in its Arabic form, the author discusses its meanings in Persian, supporting his explanations with Qur'anic verses, Prophetic hadiths, and statements of Arabic scholars. He then proceeds to narrations, sayings, and mystical discussions.

### Research Findings

Sama'ani's use of earlier works can be categorized into four groups: Arabic prose and poetry, and Persian prose and poetry. His engagement with earlier Arabic prose and poetic texts is more pronounced than with Persian ones. Among the Arabic prose sources, his reliance on Qushayri's works is greater than on others. In particular, the author of *Rawh al-Arwah* draws less on *Nahw al-Qulub* and *Kitab al-Mi'raj*, and more extensively on *Lata'if al-Isharat*, *Arba' Rasa'il fi al-Tasawwuf*, *Risalat Qushayriya*, and *Al-Tahbir fi 'Ilm al-Tadhkir* than on Qushayri's other writings.

In terms of subject matter, *Rawh al-Arwah* is closest to *Al-Tahbir* among all the works. Sama'ani's accounts of sayings, anecdotes, and hadiths align most closely with *Hilyat al-Awliya'* by Abu Nu'aym Isfahani. In *Hilyat al-Awliya'*, these narratives are typically presented with the name of the narrator, the source of the hadith, and the chain of transmitters. Additionally, some anecdotes and sayings in *Rawh al-Arwah* appear only in *Tahzib al-Asrar* by Khargushi Nishaburi, representing a translation from that work.

In the realm of Arabic poetry, Sama'ani draws on the works of renowned poets such as al-Mutanabbi, Abu Nuwas, Abu Tammam, and al-Buhturi, while poets like Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf, Sari' al-Ghawani, Jahza ibn Barmaki, and Labid 'Amiri occupy a secondary position. Among Persian prose texts, Sama'ani's use of *Sharh al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab al-Tasawwuf* is more or less literal and surpasses that of other works. He also relies on the treatises of Junayd Baghdadi, the writings of Hakim Tirmidhi, *Al-Luma' fi al-Tasawwuf* by Abu Nasr Siraj Tusi, *Qut al-Qulub* by Abu Talib Makki, the collected works of Salmi Nishaburi, *Kashf al-Mahjub* by al-Hujwiri, and others to convey the sayings of earlier mystics and numerous Sufi anecdotes. Among Persian-language poets, Sama'ani draws most extensively on the poetry of Sana'i. The verses of Mas'ud Sa'd Salman, Amir Mu'izzi, Khayyam, and Anvari appear far less frequently in *Rawh al-Arwah*. A few poems by Mawlana, 'Iraqi, and Sa'di are also found in the work, likely reflecting scribal interventions. In terms of ideas and thought, Sama'ani is most influenced by Abu Sa'id Abu'l-Khayr. It is evident that the author of *Rawh al-Arwah* was a learned and skilled scholar who did not rely unilaterally on any single source.

## Conclusion

Sama'ani's *Rawh al-Arwah* is a major work in the field of Persian mysticism and Sufism, composed in the sixth century AH. Like many literary creations, this valuable work was influenced by earlier texts and, in turn, has had an impact on subsequent writings. In addition to drawing on the Qur'an, Hadith, and well-known sayings and anecdotes, Sama'ani utilized earlier Persian and Arabic prose and poetry both literally and through translation. In his work, he also employed the words of the great figures of mysticism and Sufism in terms of ideas, meanings, themes, structure, and language. However, his eloquent expression, compelling and incisive style, and skillful use of the aesthetic devices of language and literature render *Rawh al-Arwah* distinctive, weighty, and delightful.

Like Hafez, the author of *Rawh al-Arwah* created a masterpiece by drawing on all linguistic, semantic, intellectual, and cultural elements of classical Persian and Arabic literature, producing a work fundamentally different from earlier texts. Although a close examination of *Rawh al-Arwah* reveals traces of other sources, limiting Sama'ani's borrowings to a single type of adaptation, or quantifying their frequency to determine the precise extent of their influence, is extremely difficult and, in some cases, impossible.

**Keywords:** Rawh al-Arwah, Sama'ani, Sama'ani's sources, Qushayri, Khargushi Nishaburi, Abu Nu'aym Isfahani, Persian poets.